



March 21, 2016

The Honorable Rick Jones
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
State Capitol
PO Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Mr. Chairman and Honorable Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today on behalf of the Michigan Interscholastic Press Association in support of Senate Bill 848.

My name is Jeremy Steele. I'm the director of MIPA and I teach in the Michigan State University School of Journalism. MIPA is a nonprofit organization that was founded in 1921 to work with student journalists across the state. We represent student media outlets at about 140 middle and high schools, from Sault Ste. Marie to Monroe and Detroit to Grand Haven. Our members include student newspapers, news websites, yearbooks and broadcast TV programs.

As you may know, last week was national Sunshine Week. Sunshine Week was founded by good government and media groups as a way to promote public access and transparent operations in all levels of government.

Too often, however, we take for granted the work happening every day to further this cause in the journalism classrooms of our high schools, colleges and universities. In these hands-on laboratories, tomorrow's citizens are developing their voices and practicing the core constitutional values on which our democracy was built.

Our Constitution relies on an informed public to keep the government in check. And student journalists respond to that call. They report on issues that matter in their schools and in their communities. Journalism students also learn how to evaluate the credibility of information they get from social media, news organizations and interest groups.

Senate Bill 848, the Student Free Press and Civics Readiness Act, would help encourage and protect this work by preventing unwarranted censorship of legitimate journalism.

In my role as the director of MIPA, I frequently talk to students journalists who face possible censorship. Here are a couple examples of situations from recent years where student journalists sought our help:

In Macomb County, reporters at a high school student newspaper were doing a story about the potential consequences in school when students face criminal charges outside of school. The story contained a line referring to the recent arrest of several students for a series of break-ins. The principal told the students reporters they couldn't do the story and even went so far as to tell them that students don't have First Amendment rights. This is in the same school district where school officials lost a federal court case in 2004 over censorship of the student newspaper at another of the district's schools.

Fortunately, this time officials in the district's central office saw things differently and overruled the principal's attempted censorship.

In Rochester, a principal objected to an advertisement for a pregnancy counseling center that long had run in the student newspaper and also runs in nearby high school newspapers. What the principal hadn't considered were federal court rulings that limit the ability of government entities to reject such commercial speech. The teacher and students brought these cases to the principal's attention, likely saving the school from its own lawsuit.

And at an Ann Arbor high school, student reporters pursued a story confronting the stigma surrounding mental health issues. Their work was thoughtful and sensitive. Yet the school blocked their reporting. Instead they took their story to The New York Times and NPR, which gave the students a national platform to discuss this important issue.

It would be unfair and, frankly, unrealistic, for me to expect school administrators to be experts on the First Amendment case law in each of these situations. Even those of us who are sometimes quoted as experts have a hard time keeping track of the many court cases that set the rules for student speech in school.

Tinker v. Des Moines. Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier. Bethel v. Fraser. Draudt v. Wooster. Yeo v. Lexington. Kincaid v. Gibson. And Michigan's own Dean v. Utica. That's just to name a few of the most prominent cases.

The student press law textbook I turn to for help is 420 pages long.

The Student Free Press and Civics Readiness Act, notably, is four pages long.

This bill balances the responsibility of public school officials to protect students from harm with the vital need to educate young people about the importance of the Constitution and the benefits of being civically engaged through journalism.

It brings clarity to a confusing patchwork of case law with a simple set of rules to which students and school officials can refer. It includes a common-sense list of harmful material that a school can restrict from student media - things like libel and obscenity that have no place in responsible journalism.

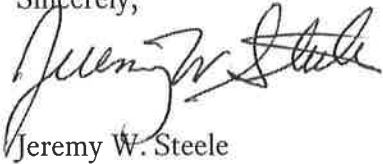
Some of the thousands of students who attend MIPA conferences and workshops each year will pursue journalism in college and beyond. But most will pursue other careers.

All of them, however, will be well-served by their student journalism training. They will leave their high school classrooms college- and career-ready as better writers, smarter researchers and more thoughtful consumers of news and information. They also will be more engaged and responsible citizens. (I am attaching several studies showing these benefits.)

We should encourage more of that kind of learning in our schools.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to working with members of the committee and the various groups that have an interest in this issue to move this bill forward and I would be happy to address any questions that you might have at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeremy W. Steele", written over a horizontal line.

Jeremy W. Steele
Executive Director
517-353-6761
jws@mipamsu.org

WHY JOURNALISM?



SCHOLASTIC JOURNALISM MATTERS

Robust scholastic journalism programs can help schools improve academic standards through the practical application of writing, development of strong research skills, real-world use of technology and encouragement of civic engagement. Few language arts programs are as naturally well aligned as journalism to the aimed outcomes of Common Core State Standards, 21st Century Skills and similar efforts to prepare youth for the modern workforce and to be engaged citizens.

MEETING TODAY'S STANDARDS

The Common Core State Standards Initiative, of which Michigan is a member, offers this profile of students who are "College and Career Ready in Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, and Language:"

- › They demonstrate independence.
- › They build strong content knowledge.
- › They respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline.
- › They comprehend as well as critique.
- › They value evidence.
- › They use technology and digital media strategically and capably.
- › They come to understand other perspectives and cultures.

Journalism is uniquely suited to help students develop each of these skills, which are ingrained in the experience of producing student-led media.

The National Council of Teachers of English long has supported the inclusion of robust journalism programs in English curriculums.

RAISING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

There also is a growing body of evidence supporting academic value of scholastic journalism. A national study, "Why Journalism Matters" by Indiana University Professor Jack Dvorak, found that students who work on high school newspapers and yearbooks:

- › get better grades in high school;
- › earn higher scores on the ACT;
- › achieve better grades as college freshman.

PREPARING YOUNG CITIZENS

A growing number of organizations conclude that students need more hands-on participation in civic activities.

Journalism meets this need for student. In addition to the practical application of

writing and visuals, development of strong research skills and real-world use of technology, journalism classes encourage of civic engagement. This includes knowing how to seek credible information and how to make positive change in a community. Students learn about social responsibility, the importance of education and how to produce news and information that is accurate, fair and responsible.

This kind of hands-on participation early in life plays an important role in motivating young people to be engaged citizens as adults. A new study by the University of Kansas found that students who are in a supportive environment as student journalists feel a greater sense of civic efficacy.

"Journalism is about civics in action," said research team leader Peter Bobkowski, a professor at the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Kansas. "It's about, how do you make things happen? How do you take issues and address them in your communities? How do you make people care about issues? I think it's so much richer than something like an exam."



LEARN MORE about the benefits of scholastic journalism at mipamsu.org
OR CONTACT THE MIPA OFFICE any time at 517-353-6761 or mipa@msu.edu



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Students who work on
high school newspapers
and yearbooks:

A:

- ☐ Get better grades
in high school
- ☐ Earn higher scores
on the ACT
- ☐ Get better grades
as college freshmen
- ☒ All of the above

High School Journalism Matters

NAA Foundation's 2008 Research Study Shows a Positive Link Between
High School Journalism and Academic Achievement





"If you are engaged in your school newspaper or your yearbook in high school, the research suggests you will be better with critical thinking skills, better with your grades and a more rigorous contributor to society."

Steve Brinkley
Professor, The Virginia-Pilot, Norfolk
Public-Interest, Group
Leadership, Communications In-
Chlorine, H&A Foundation, Board of Directors

"In this day and age, when school systems are so concerned about academic performance, no school can justify not having a student newspaper and yearbook."

Mark Gaudin
Knight Center for Scholarly Journalism
Kent State University

"If schools want to motivate and have motivated students who are involved in a multiplicity of activities, clearly journalism is a significant component of that."

Gracie Pelcinski
Vice President and Executive Director
First Amendment Center
Nashville



High School Journalism Matters

High school journalism students earn higher grade point averages, score better on the ACT college entrance examination and demonstrate better writing and grammar skills in college, compared with students who do not have those journalism experiences.

These findings are the result of new research conducted in 2008 for the Newspaper Association of America Foundation by Jack Dvorak, Ph.D., director of the High School Journalism Institute and a professor of the School of Journalism at Indiana University.

The research is based on high school grade point averages and ACT performances of 31,175 students who are attending or have attended colleges and universities in all 50 states and some foreign countries. The ACT, formerly known as The American College Testing Program Inc., is universally accepted for college admission and is administered annually to more than 1 million high school students.

Of the survey total, around 20 percent of the students served on the staffs of their high school newspapers or yearbooks. In addition to learning the practice and craft of journalism, photojournalism and publication design, they honed their critical thinking, leadership and self-management abilities.

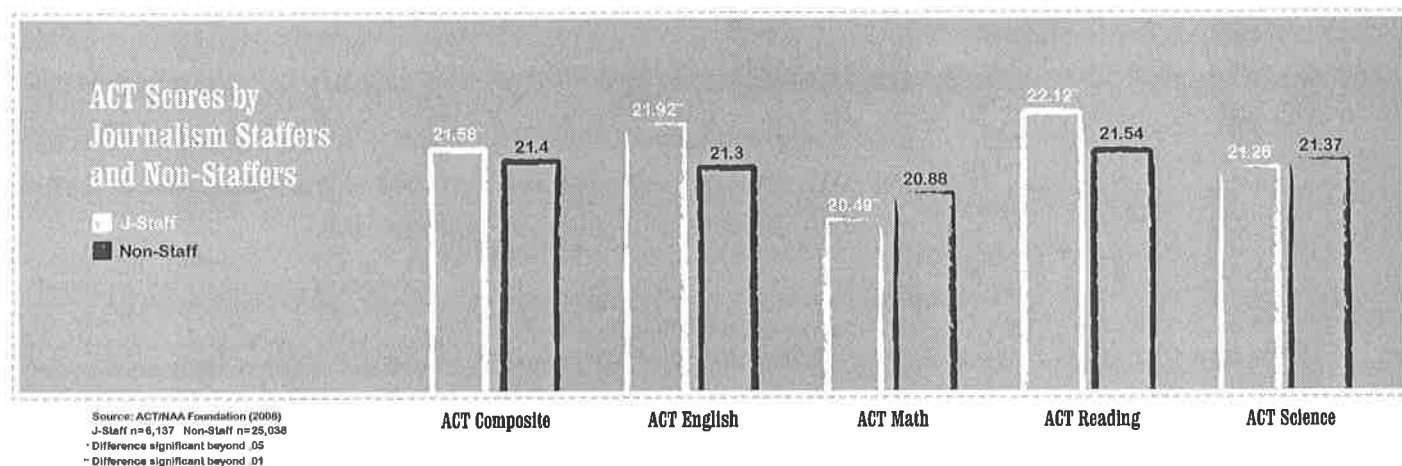
The results show a statistically significant difference in performance of the students

involved with high school journalism compared with those who had no high school journalism exposure. In this type of research, statistically significant results mean the variance in the findings actually is caused by the factor being studied, not by chance or an unrelated element.

These results mirror findings of earlier research, conducted 21 years ago, that also concluded that students with journalism experience in high school did better than non-journalism students in terms of both high school grades and ACT scores. The 2008 study involves a larger sample than the previous research and includes a more diverse set of students.

In both the 1987 and the 2008 studies, students with journalism experience in high school earned higher scores than non-journalism students in these areas:

- * High school overall grade point average
- * ACT Composite score
- * ACT English score
- * College freshman English grade
- * College freshman grade point average



The journalism students also had higher grades in high school mathematics, social science, science and English courses than non-journalism students.

Interestingly, in both 1987 and 2008, despite earning higher grades in their classroom studies, the journalism students did not fare as well as their non-journalism peers when it came to ACT Math scores.

The study also looked at a subset of the students who took Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) tests as college sophomores to see whether work on high school newspapers or yearbooks translated to better performance in colleges and universities. On both the CAAP Writing Essay and Writing Objective tests, students with high school journalism experience performed significantly better than those who lacked journalism exposure.

In terms of the college entrance examination, high school journalism staffers scored in the 64th percentile on the ACT Composite compared with scores in the 56th percentile for non-journalism students. With ACT English

scores, journalism students finished in the 65th percentile compared with the 59th percentile for non-journalism students.

And those students with high school journalism experience also fared better in ACT Reading, with scores in the 59th percentile compared with the 56th percentile for non-journalism students.

The study does not resolve the issue of whether students do better because of their journalism work or because students involved with journalism are better students. However, it shows conclusively that journalism experience in high school translates into better college performance in several key areas, such as the ability to express oneself clearly and reason incisively.

"If nothing else, we can conclude that high school newspaper or yearbook staff involvement is an excellent outlet for talented, active and involved students," the study concludes. "It also gives them a chance to apply their natural leadership abilities while also exercising their critical thinking, designing and writing skills."

In addition, based on the students' own descriptions of their activities in the profile

section of the ACT, journalism students tend to take part in far more outside-the-classroom activities than non-journalism students. Their involvement includes stage and musical performances, community endeavors and other volunteer initiatives.

These findings build on previous research by the NAA Foundation showing that students who worked on their high school newspapers or student-oriented sections of their hometown papers and who used newspapers in class or for homework were more engaged in civic activities, better educated and more involved citizens as they grew older.

For more details on this study and other NAA Foundation research, visit
 → www.naafoundation.org.



Methodology

This research is based on a study of 31,175 students who took the ACT college entrance examination during the past five years as either juniors or seniors in high school.

One of the questions in the Student Profile Section of the ACT asked students to respond to the following statement: "Worked on the staff of a school paper or yearbook."

In this study, 6,137 of the students or roughly 20 percent responded "Yes, applies to me" to that statement.

Using the data collected for the entire group of students, it was possible to compare the outcome for journalism students and non-journalism students in a number of areas, including scores on the ACT, collegiate performance, final high school grade point

averages and grades in the last high school courses taken in various subjects.

A smaller subset of the overall group also had taken the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency examinations as sophomores, making it possible to compare the results of journalism and non-journalism students for those tests as well.

Jack Dvorak, Ph.D., of Indiana University, who prepared the study for the NAA Foundation, was part of the research team behind the 1987 study "High School Journalism Confronts Critical Deadline." It also compared the performances of high school journalism students and non-journalism students.



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CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

among HIGH SCHOOL JOURNALISTS

In the spring of 2015 we surveyed more than 900 high school journalists in Kansas and Missouri about their civic engagement. We wanted to learn about **media-civic efficacy**, that is, how confident student journalists felt about using their school media to promote change in their communities.

KEY FINDINGS

Students' confidence about effectively using the media for civic change—what we are calling media-civic efficacy—appears to be an important stepping stone toward lifetime civic engagement. Journalism can help students be better citizens by teaching them how to use the media tools at their disposal to better their communities. Here is how journalism programs with students scoring higher on media-civic efficacy distinguish themselves:

- Media-civic efficacy flourishes in supportive school environments. The entire school, not just the journalism teacher, fosters a community in which student journalists feel they can use their media to address important issues.
- Student support of free expression goes hand-in-

hand with their media-civic efficacy. Students who endorse a greater number of First Amendment free-expression rights are more confident that they can express themselves through their media to promote social change.

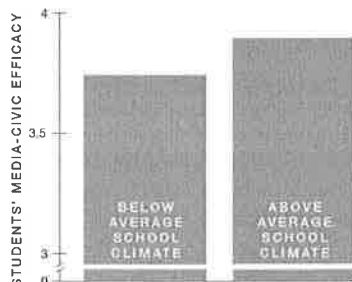
- Teachers who exert less control over their students' content advise more civically confident students. While most teachers report reading content before it is published, they tend not to prohibit, lecture against, or worry about their students tackling controversial topics in their student media.
- Students with more journalistic experience, in terms of years in a program and contributing to a news publication, express greater confidence in using the media for civic action.

WHAT ARE THE JOURNALISTS' CIVIC ISSUES?

We asked student journalists to name school or community issues that should be addressed or changed. These are the issues they identified:

attendance | backpack policy | being green | bullying | censorship | college prep | class schedule | class offerings | class sizes | closed lunch | school spirit | community service | discipline | dress code | drinking | drugs | education system | facility quality | food | grading | hallway policy | homework | honor code | ID cards | mental health | money and budgeting | parking and traffic | public displays of affection | room temperature | school administration | school start time | security | sexual assault | snow days | student input | student involvement | study hall | teacher accountability | technology | testing | voting and politics | women's issues

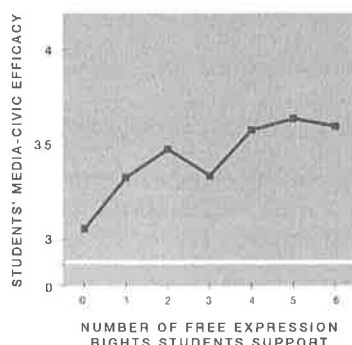
POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATES FOSTER CIVIC JOURNALISM



A positive climate means that teachers and students respect and listen to one another, that teachers set a high standard for their students, and that students feel supported by their teachers. Ten survey questions asked students about these school qualities.

On average, students agreed slightly (4.4 on a 6-point scale) that their schools fostered positive climates. Journalists in schools with above-average climates expressed greater conviction in using the media for civic change, compared to journalists in schools with below-average climates.

SUPPORT OF FIRST AMENDMENT EMPOWERS STUDENTS



Students rated their support for the freedom of expression with five questions about First Amendment rights: the rights to voice unpopular opinions, use offensive lyrics, deface the flag, criticize the government, and publish controversial content. They also indicated if they think First Amendment rights go too far.

Most students endorsed at least four of the five rights and disagreed that the First Amendment goes too far.

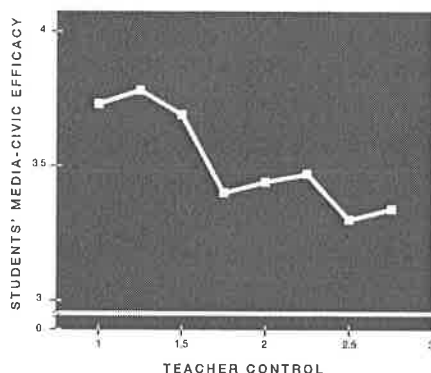
Student journalists who supported a greater number of free expression rights were also more likely than those who supported fewer rights to feel that they can use their student media for civic change.

LIGHTER TEACHER CONTROL YIELDS GREATER STUDENT CONFIDENCE

Students are more confident in their own ability to use the media as a tool of civic change when their journalism teachers exercise less direct control over their news publications and websites.

To estimate the level of control, teachers reported how frequently they worried about their students publishing controversial content, discouraged their students from covering controversial topics, re-wrote articles their students had written, or prohibited their students from publishing an article.

On average, teachers indicated that they exerted little control over their students' work. Teachers' responses clustered between "never"

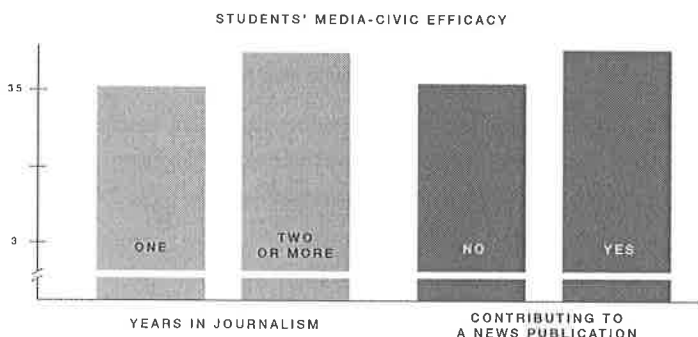


(1) and "rarely" (2). Still, teachers who scored higher on control taught students who were less likely to use the media for civic change than teachers who scored lower.

EFFICACY RISES WITH JOURNALISM EXPERIENCE

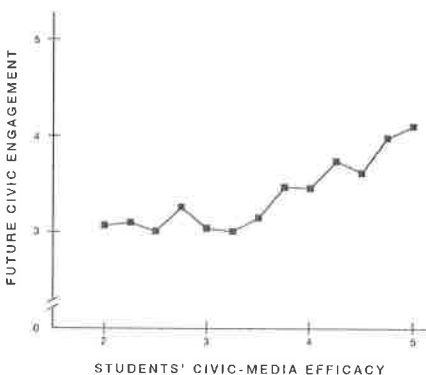
The civic payoff is greater for students who take more journalism classes and for those who contribute to a news publication.

Students who have taken journalism for more than a year and those who contribute to a news publication are more likely than less experienced journalists and those who do



not contribute to a news publication to feel confident about using the media to address a community issue.

WHY THIS MATTERS: FORGING LIFETIME CITIZENSHIP



Journalists answered 15 questions about being civically engaged in adulthood. They rated how likely they will be to express their opinions using conventional and social media, contact elected officials, sign petitions,

promote issues and candidates, and vote in elections.

Those who scored higher on media-civic efficacy also said that they anticipate being more civically engaged in adulthood.

This is why this study is meaningful: It shows that media-civic efficacy is related to—and may be a stepping stone toward—lifetime civic engagement. Journalism can give students the tools to be better citizens.

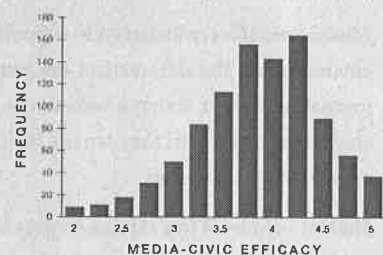
Supporting journalism means supporting programs that can produce civically aware individuals who can use the media to address important issues in their schools and neighborhoods, strengthening their communities.

HOW WE MEASURED MEDIA-CIVIC EFFICACY

Respondents came from 42 public and private high schools in metropolitan Kansas City (in Kansas and Missouri), and in Wichita. Surveys were administered online. Student journalists and journalism teachers completed separate surveys.

To measure media-civic efficacy, we first asked students to identify an issue they felt needed addressing in their schools or communities. We then asked 18 questions about whether the students could effectively use their student media to address the issue they identified.

Media-civic efficacy scores across the 18 questions ranged from "disagree" (2) to "strongly agree" (5). Most scores clustered around "agree" (4).



The differences in overall means discussed in this report are statistically significant. For further details see the online report at civicsandjournalists.org.

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

This research was conducted by a team led by Peter Bobkowski, Ph.D., of the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Kansas.

The Spencer Foundation provided generous support for this work through its New Civics initiative.

A set of journalism and civics lessons developed from this study is available at civicsandjournalists.org.

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KANSAS